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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3847
INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 001900

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP, EAP/ANP
NSC FOR D.WALTON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2019
TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM ID
SUBJECT: PAPUA -- SOME DISCONTENT IN ADVANCE OF SENSITIVE
DATE

REF: A. JAKARTA 1638
     ¶B. 2008 JAKARTA 1562 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During a recent rally in provincial capital
Jayapura, Papuan activists raised the "Morning Star"
flag--which the GOI has banned as a separatist symbol.
Police are questioning those involved, but have not yet
brought any charges (a handful of activists have been
arrested and jailed for waving the flag in the past).
Incidents like the recent Jayapura rally reflect continuing
discontent among some Papuans toward Jakarta. Protests are
likely to ratchet up somewhat in the weeks leading up to
December 1--an important date for Papuan activists. END
SUMMARY.

FLAG RAISING IN PAPUA

¶2. (SBU) Activists caused a stir by raising the banned
Morning Star flag during a November 16 demonstration in
eastern Indonesia's Papua Province. The incident took place
in front of the legislative building in the provincial
capital Jayapura. Speakers at the peaceful rally charged
that the Indonesian government has failed to implement
Papua's Special Autonomy law--a broad measure that devolves
responsibility for many areas of governance to the provincial
government. Some activists called for independence. The
police dispersed the crowd without incident and took several
people into custody for questioning. Police officials
explained that the organizers of the rally had not obtained a
permit but they have not yet charged anyone.

¶3. (C) Raising the Morning Star flag has become a way for
some Papuans to voice their discontent at what they perceive
as the region's political and economic marginalization.
While Indonesian laws--including the Papuan Special Autonomy
Law--allow the use of regional symbols, they prohibit the use
of symbols associated with separatism and illegal
organizations. Some Indonesian officials charge that the
flag is the symbol of the Free Papua Movement (OPM), which
the GOI has banned as a separatist group. However, many
Papuans assert that the flag is a cultural symbol that
predated OPM's founding and the GOI should not have banned it.

OTHER ISSUES RANKLE

¶4. (SBU) Other issues continue to rankle Papuan activists.
One tender spot concerns the August 8, 2008, killing of
Opinus Tabuni during a rally in the central highland town of
Wamena. Activists also raised the Morning Star flag at that
rally. Unknown assailants gunned down Tabuni during an event
marking the UN International Day of the World's Indigenous
People. Many Papuans have charged the military or police

with responsibility for the shooting. While police have
investigated the case, they have not charged anyone with the
shooting. Human rights groups have vowed to organize rallies
and undertake other measures to pressure the government to
charge someone in the case. An Army spokesman told reporters
that the military would not interfere in the investigation
and pledged that any military personnel who may have been ere
involve would held accountable according to the law.

KEY DATE LOOMS

¶5. (C) Demonstrations and flag raising incidents are likely
to continue in the weeks leading up to December 1--the date
in 1961 that Dutch colonial authorities began allowing
Papuans to use symbols of sovereignty like the Morning Star
flag. (Note: The Netherlands transferred effective control
of the region to Indonesia in 1963.) However, the Yudhoyono
administration has promised to give the region special
attention during its second term, which began on October 20.
Given what they regard as a long string of broken promises,
many Papuans are likely to be skeptical until that effort
shows some concrete results.

HUME